THE ART EXHIBITION CATALOGUES OF THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
20 Newmarket Road
Cambridge CB5 8DT
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck NJ 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1979

Series: The purpose of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers.

Serial numbers: Each title is identified by a three part serial number. The first part of the serial number designates the sales list in which the title was first announced. The second part indicates the agent of publication, i.e. the museum, gallery or organisation that was responsible for the publication of the catalogue. The third part of the serial number is the number allotted to that title.

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Technical data:

Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Ltd., Cambridge, England

Z 5055
LONDON:
Victoria &
Albert

PALISSY TO PICASSO

1970

TIMES OF OPENING

TUESDAY—SATURDAY 10.30—12.45
2.15— 5.00
SUNDAY 2.30— 5.30
CLOSED MONDAYS (EXCEPT AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY)

All enquiries to the Secretary, The Arts Centre, The New Metropole, The Leas, Folkestone. Tel: Folkestone 55070

London: Victoria & Albert Museum

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

KENT EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FRENCH EARTHENWARE from PALISSY to PICASSO

A travelling Exhibition arranged by the Victoria & Albert Museum

18th JULY—6th SEPTEMBER, 1970

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INTRODUCTION

No European country offers a greater variety of lively and original styles in its pottery than France. This exhibition gives a brief survey of the major developments in French earthenwares over the last four centuries, beginning with the highly individual lead-glazed wares of the great experimental potter Bernard Palissy and his school in the sixteenth century, and ending with Picasso's exciting foray into the field in the 1940s and '50s which added a new chapter to the story of the artist potter movement.

The fascinating variety of Palissy's work is covered in a series of pieces which range from a dish which is very probably from his own hand decorated in high relief with figures of a lizard and a frog and shells moulded directly from nature to a version of one of allegorical subjects which can be ascribed to his followers working at Avon near Fontainebleau. Palissy's interest in glazes is reflected in some other extremely rare contemporary pieces which are shown in the same case—two of the little-known, but magnificent, vases which seem to have been made in Avignon in the very early seventeenth century, and one of the somewhat mysterious and quite individual ewers which probably originated in the Vallee d'Auge in the Calvados region of Normandy. Like many of the more elaborate French earthenwares of this period, these are purely ornamental and quite unusable.

With the tin-glazed earthenwares *(faïence)* we come to a ware which is both elaborately decorated by painting, and extremely practical. The tin-glaze technique reached France in the early sixteenth century from Italy, and the earliest French wares of this type, the very rare pieces produced at Lyons and Rouen, derive their style directly from Italian *maiolica*. The influence of *maiolica* is still visible in the earliest piece of faïence in this exhibition—a small bottle made in the mid-seventeenth century at Nevers. But French *faïence* soon developed a strong flavour of its own which was to become as powerful an influence in Europe in the eighteenth century as the Italian style had been in the sixteenth—an influence which eventually acted in reverse to affect the style of the later Italian wares.

Possibly the first example of an emancipated style can be seen in the lovely *'bleu persan'* wares which were produced in Nevers in the second half of the seventeenth century. These are painted in white, or white and yellow, on a deep blue ground, and derive their shapes and their decoration from Chinese porcelain style filtered through Persia. There are several of these pieces in the exhibition, together with another early Nevers piece painted with a Chinese scene in blue and purple on white.

The splendid flowering of *faïence* at Rouen in the early eighteenth century announces a truly national style. An entire case is devoted to demonstrating the range of the Rouen style of this period, which ranges from the delicate blue-and-white painting on a small sugar caster to the bold polychrome decoration of a large wall-cistern.

The decoration on these earlier wares was fired at a high temperature, and this restricted the range of colours which could be used, which are known as the 'grand feu' colours. From about the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the range of colours was extended by enamel colours which were fixed in a separate firing at a lower temperature (the colours of the *'petit feu'*). There are examples of these *petit feu faïences* from the major factories in Eastern France, Strasburg and Niderviller, and, for comparison there are pieces from two of the lesser-known factories, Luneville and Aprey.

The faïence of Southern France is represented by a representative selection from the various styles of Moustiers, and there are two pieces from the famous factory at Marseilles.

Towards the end of the 18th century the *faïence* factories found themselves no longer able to compete with the new cream-coloured earthenwares imported from Staffordshire and Leeds, which were much cheaper to produce. Many of them were forced to close, and as a result one of the most brilliant episodes in the history of European pottery came to an end. Some of the factories, however, began to manufacture creamwares themselves, and the exhibition includes an exceptionally fine early example of French creamware from the Luneville factory in the form of a bust of Louis XV, modelled by the well-known sculptor Jean Baptiste Lemoyne. A small amount of *faïence* continued to be made in a few provincial centres. One rare example in the exhibition is a dish from Hesdin in the Pas-de-Calais painted in a charming naive style which is reminiscent of the English blue-dash chargers of the seventeenth century.

The nineteenth century was a period of experiment in French pottery. An early example of this is the Rubelles dish in which a 'photographic' effect is ingeniously achieved by covering a relief design with a thick green glaze. The dish dates from about 1840, and its subject, a lioness with cubs, is fully in the spirit of the Romantic painters of the time.

In the second half of the nineteenth century France became the cradle of the European studio pottery movement. Most of the early French artist potters worked in stoneware, but two of the most important, Deck and Massier, worked in earthenware, and

they are represented by one piece each. Massier was one of the first artist potters to work at the village of Vallauris, near Cannes, which today is one of the great centres of French art pottery.

During the late 1940s Picasso became interested in pottery, and formed an association with Georges Ramié, one of the potters working in Vallauris. Two of the products of this association are in the exhibition: a dish painted with a characteristic dove made by Ramié to Picasso's design, and a large dish with a goat's head in relief pressed on a mould carved by Picasso himself.

EXHIBITS

Case 1:

Ewer. Lead-glazed earthenware. Pays d'Auge (Calvados); early 17th century.

Vase. Lead-glazed earthenware. Avignon; about 1600.

Ewer. Lead-glazed earthenware. Avignon; about 1600.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. School of Bernard Palissy; second half of the 16th century.

Dish with figure symbolic of Summer. Lead-glazed earthenware. School of Bernard Palissy (probably Avon); late 16th century.

Dish with a scene of the Baptism of Christ. Lead-glazed earthenware. School of Bernard Palissy (probably Avon); late 16th century.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. Probably made by Bernard Palissy; second half of the 16th century.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. By Bernard Palissy or one of his school; second half of the 16th century.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. By Bernard Palissy or one of his school; second half of the 16th century.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. Possibly Southern French; about 1600.

Case 2:

Bottle. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence), Nevers; middle of the 17th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Nevers; 1650-80.

Dish. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with a 'bleu persan' ground. Nevers; 1650-80.

Dish. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with a 'bleu persan' ground. Nevers; 1650-80.

Vase. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with a 'bleu persan' ground. Nevers; 1650-80.

Case 2: *continued*

Bottle. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with a 'bleu persan' ground. Nevers; 1650-80.

Pair of vases. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence) with a 'bleu persan' ground. Nevers; 1650-80.

Dish. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Moustiers; about 1720-40.

Jug. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Moustiers; (Laugier & Olerys factory); 1740-50.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Moustiers; (Laugier & Olerys factory); about 1750.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Moustiers; 1750-70.

Case 3:

Wall-cistern and cover. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate with the arms of Poterat. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; 1720-30.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; about 1740.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; about 1750.

Ewer. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Sugar-sifter. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Rouen; early 18th century.

Case 4:

Bust of Louis XV, after a model by Jean Baptiste Lemoyne. Lead-glazed earthenware (creamware). Luneville; about 1770.

Orange-seller. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Niderviller; 1770-84.

Woman selling pig's trotters. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Eastern French; late 18th century.

Pot-pourri and cover. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Strasburg; Paul Hannong period, 1749-60.

Dish. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Niderviller; Beyerlé period, 1754-70.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Luneville; about 1770.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Strasburg; Paul Hannong period, 1749-60.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Niderviller; Custine period, about 1780.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Niderviller; perhaps about 1770.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Aprey (Haute-Marne); about 1780.

Plate. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Marseilles; about 1760-80.

Flower-vase and cover. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Marseilles; about 1770.

Case 5:

Dish. Tin-glazed earthenware (faïence). Hesdin (Pas-de-Calais); early 19th century.

Dish. Earthenware, with an impressed design covered with a green glaze. Rubelles; about 1840.

Vase. Terracotta. By Massier, Vallauris (Alpes Maritimes); 1871.

Dish. Lead-glazed earthenware. By Théodore Deck, Paris; 1878.

Case 5 *continued*

Bird figure. Earthenware covered with a greenish black glaze. By George Jouve, Paris; 1951.

Dish. Earthenware, covered with a black slip, incised, painted and glazed. By George Ramié, Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (Alpes Maritimes) after a design by Pablo Picasso; 1949.

Dish. Earthenware. Pressed on a mould carved by Pablo Picasso and painted to his design at the Madoura Pottery, Vallauris (Alpes Maritimes); about 1957.

Catalogue designed by Louise Elgie

PRINTED BY A. R. ADAMS & SONS, 37 CASTLE STREET, DOVER